[Deever Taylors]

November 10, 1938.

Deever Taylor and family.

Balfour, N. C.

Mill carder.

Frank Massimino, writer.

BALFOUR AND THE DEEVER TAYLORS,

Balfour, North Carolina

No names changed. C[9?] - 1/[?]/41 - [??]

Note:

Hyman Poole, groceryman, a native South [?] Carolinian , has had a business in Balfour for several years. Two-thirds of his trade is on a credit basis, a practice that, when employment at the mill is at low ebb, or none at all, finds him, sometimes, with as little as six cents on hand.

Deever Taylor is a carder at the mill. His wife, Will, or 'Bill', as she is generally known, is a weaver. They have three children, Elizabeth, nine, Jack, eight, and Margaret, five. Jack, who has epilepsy, sometimes attends the second grade at [Balfour school?].

Massimino, Frank,

November 10, 1938.

Balfour And The Deever Taylors,

Balfour, North Carolina.

The dirt road came abruptly out of the pine woods and wound arterially through the village. It went past rows of white houses, past the mill site at the railroad tracks and upward a few hundred feet, where it suddenly joined the state highway. At one corner of the intersection stood a church; and on the other, facing the main road, was a tin covered shed-type building. You couldn't see from the side [?] what the structure housed, but several times, when a bell jangled, you could tell from the familiar sound that it was probably a store. There were two other stores down in the village, and on the doors were the same kind of bells, and in the windows was displayed an array of 2 general merchandise.

This proved to be the same sort of store, except that, probably because it was on the highway, it served as a filling station too. Apparently a good many people from the village came up here to buy, although the other stores were nearer, because you could hear the bell on the door jangle a good deal, tolling the customers in and out. They got vegetables, or a pound of dried beans, or some [wizened?] frankfurters, and a box of matches and a package of ten cent cigarettes, and then stood around and talked while the storekeeper laboriously wrote out a credit slip. Sometimes a man would come inside and order a soft drink, and then join the people around the stove, because the early morning air was cool outside, and the heat felt good.

The bell jangled and a man thrust his head in the store and called out to everyone in general, 'Any of you-all goin' to be drivin' anywheres about Hendersonville?' Someone said, 'No not as I know of.' But apparently the man at the door didn't catch the reply. He came inside and closed the door. He knew 3 the storekeeper. 'Hello, Poole,' he said. 'You doin' any good?'

The storekeeper was candid. 'Hell no,' he said, 'You?'

The man shook his head. He was about fourty-five. He had on a black coat over a pair of overalls. His black hat had faded greenish around the sweat band, and the crown had hole punched in it. His left arm was bandaged to the elbow and rested in a black cloth sling that hung from his neck. The fingers that stuck through the end of the bandage were an angry red color and swollen.

'I didn't rightly hear [if?] any of you-all were goin' to town,' he said hopefully. The storekeeper shook his head. He thought, however, that maybe the man could ride in with the bread man. 'He'll be along pretty soon,' he said.

'I reckon I'll just wait then,' said the man. Then he seriously explained to everyone within hearing, 'This here arm is a-hurtin' such that I caint bear a-walkin' in.'

The storekeeper was sociable. 'Sit down! Sit down and rest! he cried. Then as the man took a seat at the counter, he went on.

4

'You been laid up long?'

'I aint drawed a pay in six weeks,' the man said, and then seeing that his listeners were interested in him, he added, 'That's how come me to want to git in to Hendersonville so bad this mornin'. I aim to see about that insurance compensation.'

'Unemployment compensation,' the storekeeper corrected agreeably. He added candidly, 'Anyhow one of the extra hands will be glad to get in some time at the mill.'

'They gota live too,' the man argued dispassionately.

All the men thought his point of view was rational.

One of them said: 'That's right. [?] Everybody's got to live.' Another thought, however, that some people seemed to live a good deal better than others. 'Like that time the men at the

mill was unloadin' that freight car,' he said, 'and found that note the loaders from up North has stuck on a box.' He looked around the stove, past the candy counter, and called to an acquaintance sitting at the counter. 'Jim what was it that note said?'

5

Jim said, 'They wrote: “We get fifty cents an hour for loading this. How much do you poor bastards get for unloading it?"

This tale interested some of the men, because it seemed that the contents of the note had not been generally known before.

'Fifty cents an hour,' one of them repeated. He turned to the man sitting next to him. 'Do you reckon that's right?'

'Sure,' his friend answered in a matter-of-fact way.

'I wonder how much our boys did get for the unloading',' someone said, going back to the point made in the note.

Jim thought that maybe it was twenty-five cents an hour. 'Seems I recall they always did make that.' he said.

There seemed to be some disagreement on this matter, however, his friends arguing the matter good-naturedly, and one of them said finally, 'I heard it was fifteen cents.' But that didn't seem to strike anybody as being correct. It was generally agreed the mill wage had been twenty cents then, and raised to twenty-five since the wage and hour law came into effect. 'Anyways' someone concluded philosophically, 'it 6 wasn't fifty cents.'

There was general agreement on that.

The bread man cam finally; he dumped several loaves of bread and several cakes on the counter, and made out his slips. The storekeeper spoke for his friend. 'Got room on your truck for this man?'

'I guess so. I can make room,' said the driver generously. He addressed the man with the bandage. 'That's if you don's mind waiting in the truck while I make a couple of stops on the way in.'

The man didn't mind. 'I aint in no big hurry,' he said. 'It's just that I caint much walk it.'

They went outside and got in the truck, and you could hear the man telling the driver about his injury. Then the truck ground in to gear, and disappeared down the highway toward Hendersonville.

II

A short distance from the store, where the ridge of pines of the North encroached on the village like an apparition from out of the wilderness, several men stood in a group at the 7 rear of one of the mill houses. Apparently they were getting ready to butcher a pig, because bubbling over with boiling water were two immense kettles, and the men were rubbing their knives down with whet-rocks and getting the swabbing cloths ready. A man wearing laced boots and a hunting cap stood apart from the others. He was holding a boy by the hand, and you could tell from their features that they were probably father and son. They were feeding a pig an ear of corn. It was small; it couldn't hardly have weighed more than one hundred and twenty-five pounds. But even so, it was probably as heavy as most of the other pigs you could see when you came into the village past the common piglet, if you came by the way of one of the back roads. In fact, there were very few pigs in the lot, and besides, those that were there would be slaughtered, small as they were.

There was a reason for this, of course. These mill people couldn't afford a bigger pig, for one thing. They had to pay for rental of the pig-lot, or for pasture, if they kept a cow, and

when you added to that the fact that most of them earned just twelve dollars a week, 8 and out of that paid a dollar and a quarter a week rent for the four room houses they lived in, you began to understand why they didn't hold the little pigs longer, or attempt to fatten a big hog. Even if you didn't allow for any other deductions, all of which were conveniently made at the mill offices before an employee got his check, and there were some others, such as electric light bills, if the consumption of energy was over the maximum (each home is allowed twelve kilowatt hours of electricity free; or enough, in other words, to light one bulb a few hours a day for a mouth), you couldn't possibly see where a mill worker could clear more than ten dollars a week.

Apparently, therefore, you could expect to see these people practice economy no matter how small the scale, because the man with the laced boots didn't even waste a final nubbin of corn on the pig he was about to kill, but got it to stand still simply by cornering it, and then shot it.

The boy ran when his father shot, terrified over the noise and the excitement and the lurching and flailing of the mortally wounded pig.

'Hey! Deever! the man called, 9 amused [over?] the antics of the boy, who seemed about ready to burst with excitement, 'look at your young'un!'

The boy kept on running.

'You'll hurt yourself, stop it!' his father yelled.

The boy fell down finally and tried very hard to cry, but the tears wouldn't come because he wasn't hurt.

'You ought to be in the bed, boy,' his father said, picking him up. 'Hey! Will!' he shouted to someone inside the house, 'come and got this young 'un!'

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'What in the world is the matter?' a woman called through the screen door, and then stepped out onto the back porch. She was about thirty-five, pleasant-faced, and despite her appearance of general good health, she had a pinched look about her eyes, like her husband and the little boy. Apparently she had been preparing dinner when her husband called, because she still held in her hands a paring knife and a pan of collard greens.

'Jack, you come here,' she called not unkindly to the boy.

But Jack had other ideas. He started 10 to run again, and his sister was [dispatched?] to catch him. She came around the corner of the house, finally, leading him by the hand, and reluctant, petulant drag on her arm.

She led him past the men. Then she said. 'Jack gets fits,' all very innocently and direct.

'Elizabeth!'

Her father stopped his work.

'Yes, ma,' she said meekly. Still holding her brother's hand, she went inside.

Everyone seemed to be extraordinarily busy at the moment, and besides, they all shared the feeling that it wasn't their place to say the first word.

The boy's mother thought she had better go in and turn on the [radio?]. 'Jack's the worst about listenin' to the [radio?] preachers,' she said. She added, 'It keeps him quiet.'

The men made the dressing a neat job; and when the pork was hung, and water sluiced over it, they stretched themselves and stood back to admire. The eleven thirty whistle had just blown at the mill. It was a good deal warmer outside. 'You'd better salt that pork down right away, Deever,' one of the men said. 11 'It might spoil.'

Deever nodded agreement. He shouted toward the kitchen window, 'Oh, Will! Come here a minute! Then he stretched his arms and yawned contentedly. 'Boy, what a day!' he said. 'I'll bet those guys in the card room at the mill are aching to be out.'

Somebody laughed. 'And so will you, tomorrow.'

'Well, maybe I'd be better off if I was there now,' Deever replied languidly. He smiled. 'There aint no profit in taking a day off.'

His wife came outside then, followed by a red headed girl [who apparently?] was a friend of the family.

Deever told her: 'Go up to Poole's, Will, and get me a dimes worth of salt.'

'Well...'

'Tell him I'll pay Saturday for what we owe.'

She turned to her companion. 'Coming with me Francis?'

The girl thought she could.

They crossed the yard, but at the sidewalk they stopped to talk with someone they 12 knew. It was the man with the bandage. Deever called to his wife, ' Hey! Will! Hurry up! This here pork's liable to spoil.'

The man with the bandage whistled a tune as he disappeared down the street, and you could hear the women laughing about something long after they went out of view.